NUMERICAL STRENGTH

The usual figure quoted for the population of China is four hundred millions. All totals are, however, a source of sharp disagreement among experts. Census methods comparable in accuracy with those employed in the modern West and Japan and even in India have never been applied to China as a whole. The best estimates possible are approximations which may ultimately prove to be in error by tens of millions. For example, a census was taken by the government in 1910, in which the returns were by households. Serious uncertainty exists as to the average number of individuals in a household, and attempts to translate the figures from households to individuals result in such variant totals for all China as 342.6 millions and 329.6 millions. Even the accuracy of the number of households is highly debatable. A careful estimate made in 1918-1919 by the Protestant missionary forces gave a total of individuals in all China of 452.6 millions *(tor* China proper and Manchuria of 440.9 millions), but the compiler regarded the figures as only approximations and declared that the then population of Chinese Republic was between 350 and 400 millions. An estimate made in 1920 by the Post Office placed the population of China proper and Manchuria at 427.6 millions, and another one made in 1926 by the same agency gave for China proper and Manchuria a total of 485.5 millions. At least one other calculation is still higher than this last. Another estimate—for 1930—put the population in that year at 445 millions, official figures of the Nanking Government released in 1931 give it as 474.4 millions, and the total announced by the Nanking

Government in 1932 was 474.78 millions. One of the greatest of Occidental authorities on population statistics, after some years of study and evaluation of available returns, estimated all China to have had 342 millions in 1930, but recognized "that no one knows what the population of China is within many millions." His figure, however, has been vigorously contested as far too low.

The population is very unevenly distributed. The areas of greatest density are in the fertile alluvial plains in the southeastern part of Kiangsu and the northeastern part of Chekiang, on the North China plain, particularly where Shantung, Honar,